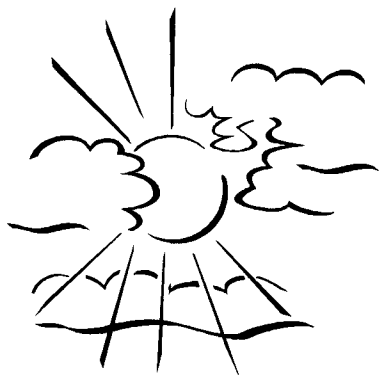


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Articles in Today's Clips

Tuesday, October 11, 2005

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A welcome weapon against Medicaid fraud Whistleblower bill would help state collect

Ann Arbor News

Tuesday, October 11, 2005

Michigan's health-care fraud unit last year recovered \$14 million.

The most ever.

But it's just a sliver of the \$800 million estimated to have been stolen from the state by Medicaid providers. Like several other states' fraud units, Michigan's has been unable to considerably increase its retrieval of state money because of budget constraints. The budget for Attorney General Mike Cox's fraud unit, for one, is scarcely more than it was five years ago.

But 15 states with whistleblower laws have brought in as much as four times Michigan's take. Michigan now has a good chance to significantly improve its numbers, with the overwhelming passage in the state House last week of its own whistleblower legislation.

The measure, sponsored by Republican Reps. David Law of Commerce Township and Roger Kahn of Saginaw Township, would allow individuals to file civil suits in the state's name to recover losses from Medicaid fraud. And they could get up to 30 percent of any settlement, or as much as 25 percent if the attorney general should intervene.

Moreover, the measure would prevent employers from punishing employees who have sued them or cooperated in a fraud investigation.

Cox argues that health-care providers would steal less from Medicaid if they knew their employees could file a lawsuit on the state's behalf. Supporters note that it took laws allowing whistleblowers to receive similar financial awards for them to come forward in other states. And backers of the Michigan legislation note that outfits like Cox's fraud unit currently are stretched too thin to deal with all the tips reported to them.

The inroads against fraud other states are seeing by allowing whistleblowers to sue providers argues for Michigan's Senate passing the House bill, and Gov. Jennifer Granholm signing it. And their doing so over the objections of some in the health-care industry, who believe it would add another burden to a community already having to contend with soaring malpractice insurance rates. The industry also is concerned with the legislation leading to the filing of frivolous lawsuits.

Monitoring the program could identify a rash of suits filed with little-to-no-merit, if they were to develop. If they did, that problem could be addressed.

But the rampant Medicaid fraud now preying on the state needs a fix, not a postponement of a remedy. The whistleblower measure can help provide it.

As Deadline Nears, Sorting Out the Medicare Drug Plan

By ROBERT PEAR
The New York Times

Published: October 11, 2005

WASHINGTON, Oct. 10 - In the next few weeks, millions of Medicare beneficiaries will make decisions that could affect their out-of-pocket medical costs for years to come.

They have to decide whether to sign up for a prescription drug plan, sorting through dozens of options with radically different costs and benefits.

Information issued by the government, while generally accurate, tends to give an upbeat assessment of the new benefit, emphasizing the advantages. But the new program is so complex that the government, by its own account, has made two significant errors in explaining it to the public.

Federal health officials incorrectly described the standard minimum drug benefit in an advertisement that appeared on Sept. 25 in Parade magazine, the Sunday newspaper supplement with a circulation of more than 37 million. In addition, the official Medicare handbook, sent to all beneficiaries, significantly overstates the number of prescription drug plans that will be available without any premiums for low-income people.

The Bush administration has notified Congress of the errors and says they will be corrected in future brochures and on the Medicare Web site.

Drug plans began marketing activities, including unsolicited telephone calls to beneficiaries, on Oct. 1. People can sign up on Nov. 15. Coverage begins Jan. 1. And May 15 is the last day to sign up in 2006.

A person who spends \$2,000 a year on prescription drugs could save \$928 next year under a drug plan offering the standard benefit with average premiums. A Medicare beneficiary who spends \$4,850 on medicines would save \$1,116. But people with only \$530 in drug costs would pay one-third more than they do now.

Here are questions and answers about the program, gleaned from the 2003 Medicare law, federal regulations and interviews with health officials and Medicare experts who counsel beneficiaries.

QUESTION To whom is the drug benefit available?

ANSWER Everyone on Medicare. It should be particularly useful to people with low incomes or high drug expenses. But the government says that all beneficiaries should consider signing up because most will eventually need prescription drugs, and if they delay enrolling, they will generally be subject to financial penalties.

Q. Do beneficiaries have to do anything to get the new coverage?

A. Yes. In general, people will not automatically receive the drug benefit. They need to sign up for a specific plan, offered not by the government but by a private insurance company, which is subsidized and regulated by the government.

Q. Can people put off a decision until they really need help with their drug costs?

A. Yes. But they face higher premiums, with a 1 percent surcharge for each month of delay. If a person delayed enrollment for two years, the premium could be permanently increased by 24 percent.

Q. How much will the new drug coverage cost?

A. Premiums, co-payments and other costs vary from one insurance plan to another. Premiums will average \$32 a month, but range from less than \$2 to more than \$100. Every state but Alaska will have at least one plan with a premium less than \$20 a month.

Q. Should people sign up even if they spend very little on drugs?

A. It might be worthwhile to do so, experts say. Even if healthy beneficiaries do not immediately save money, they can obtain protection against unexpected or catastrophic costs, just as people do when they insure their homes against fire and storm damage.

Q. How does a person decide which drug plans are best?

A. This will not be easy. In almost every state, more than 40 free-standing prescription drug plans will be available. One plan may cover 1,300 drugs, while another covers 2,500. The first plan may have lower premiums. But total out-of-pocket costs may be lower under the second plan.

Under many plans, the beneficiary will have to pay 20 percent of the cost of each prescription. Under other plans, the beneficiary will have to pay \$5 for a generic drug, \$25 for a preferred brand-name drug and \$45 for other brand-name medicines.

Over all, the government says, the new benefit will pay about half of drug costs for a typical person with Medicare next year. But savings will vary widely, depending on a person's circumstances.

Q. If a Medicare beneficiary signs up for a particular drug plan in 2006, will it be available in later years?

A. Not necessarily. The company can pull out of Medicare in 2007. With federal approval, it can raise premiums, cover different drugs or fundamentally change the structure of the benefit. Beneficiaries can then shop for other plans.

Q. Many retirees already have drug coverage from former employers. How does the new Medicare drug benefit work for them?

A. In many cases, retirees will want to keep their current coverage because it is more generous than Medicare's standard drug benefit. Many employers have said they intend to maintain drug coverage for retirees next year, with the help of federal subsidies.

By Nov. 15, every employer who provides drug coverage to retirees is supposed to send them notices stating whether the coverage is at least as good as the standard Medicare benefit.

Employers are supposed to send the same type of notice to active workers eligible for Medicare. Retirees who do not receive such notices should check with their former employers.

At some companies, retirees may lose all employer-sponsored health benefits, including coverage for doctors' services and hospital care, if they enroll in a Medicare drug plan. Other employers will supplement the Medicare drug benefit or help pay the premiums.

Q. Neighborhood drugstores are giving out information on the new benefit. Can people enroll there?

A. In some cases, yes. Many drugstores will allow licensed insurance agents to enroll people on the spot. For example, CVS says it will allow sales representatives from Aetna, Humana and UnitedHealth Group to sign up Medicare beneficiaries in its stores. Humana says it will have sales representatives in more than 3,200 Wal-Mart stores around the country.

Pharmacies can distribute marketing materials, including enrollment application forms, for Medicare drug plans. But they are forbidden to steer people to a particular plan.

Q. Many people have private insurance that supplements Medicare. Some of these Medigap policies cover prescription drugs. Can people keep that coverage?

A. Yes. But in many cases, people will save money and get better coverage if they sign up for the new Medicare drug benefit. People cannot have drug benefits from a Medigap policy and a Medicare drug plan at the same time.

If people keep a Medigap drug policy that is less generous than the standard Medicare drug benefit, they may face a late enrollment penalty if they decide to sign up for Medicare drug coverage in the future. Those who sign up for a Medicare drug plan next year can buy a separate Medigap policy to help pay for doctors and hospitals, but not drugs.

In many parts of the country, Medicare beneficiaries have other options. They can get all Medicare benefits, including prescription drugs, from a health maintenance organization or a preferred provider organization. In some plans, like H.M.O.'s, beneficiaries may save money, but face restrictions on their choice of doctors and hospitals.

Q. What about people who cannot afford drug coverage under Medicare?

A. One-third of all Medicare beneficiaries may be able to qualify for extra financial help. The assistance will be available to an individual with annual income less than \$14,355 and assets less than \$11,500. The same type of aid will be available to couples with incomes less than \$19,245 and assets less than \$23,000. Assets include savings, investments and real estate other than a home.

The extra assistance, worth an average of more than \$2,000 a year, will reduce premiums, deductibles and co-payments for those who qualify.

Camp to hold forum on Medicare Rx program

News Update

OWOSSO

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION
Tuesday, October 11, 2005

By Marjory Raymer
mraymer@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6325

OWOSSO - U.S. Rep. Dave Camp, R-Midland, will host a forum on the new Part D Prescription Drug Benefit for Medicare beneficiaries this week.
The event is 12:30-1:30 p.m. Thursday at the Shiawassee Council on Aging, 300 N. Washington St. in Owosso. Camp is expected to attend.

For information on lunch before the event, call (989) 723-8875.

Michigan Report

October 10, 2005

STATE HAS ADEQUATE FLU VACCINES, BUT BIRD FLU A WORRY

The state expects to have adequate levels of vaccine to guard against standard flu viruses, an improvement from last year when limited supplies were directed to the most vulnerable groups, and is taking steps to deal with bird, or avian, flu for which there is no effective vaccine, the state's chief medical executive said Monday.

Dean Sienko, the acting state chief medical executive, told reporters the national supply of vaccine for standard types of flu would provide 90 million-100 million doses, about 40 percent more than last year. The amount Michigan will receive will not be known for a few weeks.

Michigan – which had about 1.9 million doses that it targeted to the 3.4 million elderly, those with respiratory diseases and other high priority populations last year – recorded its third-highest level of flu in 2004-05. The season generally peaks around the first of the year. One case has been reported to date, in Kalamazoo County, which was also the site of the first case of flu last season.

Mr. Sienko said preparations have begun in the state to deal with any outbreaks of the bird flu, whose potential for a flu pandemic is worrying health professionals and political leaders across the country. He said drills, taken from the template of dealing with terrorist attacks that was developed after the 9/11 attacks, are in progress in some areas of the state such as identifying location of additional hospital beds to treat flu victims and procedures to establish quarantine zones.

The Centers for Disease Control says there are no vaccines yet available that are considered effective in preventing bird flu, though testing on a vaccine has been underway since April.

Residents march against abuse

Southfield event, others mark Domestic Violence Awareness Month as Granholm puts out call.

By Shawn D. Lewis / The Detroit News

October 11, 2005

SOUTHFIELD -- Angela Boone is an independent business owner in the male-dominated field of construction who signs million-dollar contracts. She's an author of four books. She's a single mother of two daughters, 21 and 18.

And she's a woman who has suffered abuse.

Boone, who documents the abuse in her book, "Holy Matrimony," wants to do her part in raising awareness of domestic abuse. She plans to participate in a march against domestic violence Thursday evening in Southfield, where she lives.

"The constant verbal abuse was horrible," said Boone, president and CEO of Boone International in downtown Detroit.

"People automatically think sexual abuse or physical abuse when they think about domestic violence. But verbal abuse is just as bad because the abuser tries to destroy who you are by beating you down emotionally."

The march is one of a number of activities taking place across the country this month, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

According to the Michigan State Police Uniform Crime Report, there were 48,310 cases of domestic violence reported in 2003, the most recent year for which data are available.

The march is the third annual sponsored by Dr. Wendell Scales, a dentist from West Bloomfield.

March details
The March Against Domestic Violence will begin at 6 p.m. Thursday in the parking lot of the Southfield Police Department, 26000 Evergreen. Marchers will proceed a short distance to the Southfield Library, where a program will be presented with guest speakers. Refreshments will be served. Flashlights will be provided for marchers to carry in lieu of candles to commemorate victims of domestic violence. For information, call (248) 350-8226.

Men are encouraged to participate in the march, which begins at 6:45 p.m. in the parking lot of the Southfield police station, proceeding to the new Southfield Library.

"The reason I selected 6:45 p.m. as the starting time is that in many homes, that is the time when much of the abuse begins, right around the dinner hour," said Scales, who said dentists are among the first professionals to witness abuse victims, who come in with broken teeth and jaws.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm's declaration of Domestic Violence Awareness Month said the state "is committed to taking a firm position against domestic violence and will remain focused on ensuring that women and children are safe in their homes and abusers are held accountable for their crimes." She called on Michigan residents to "join in the efforts to help bring an end to this serious problem."

Domestic Violence Awareness Month evolved from the first Day of Unity observed in October 1981, by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. In 1989, the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month Commemorative Legislation was passed by Congress.

The problem persists in Michigan. Michigan's 2003 total included 12,322 cases of domestic violence in Wayne County; 4,130 in Oakland County; 3,457 in Macomb County; and 374 in Livingston County.

But many victims never file a report.

"It is such a hidden crime," said Belle Kleinberg, a volunteer intern and donation coordinator of HAVEN shelter for women in Oakland County.

"It could be happening to your next-door neighbor, your co-worker or your sister, and you may not have any idea what's going on."

There is no typical victim of domestic abuse and they cannot easily be picked out of a crowd, Kleinberg said.

"Domestic abuse occurs in any economic status, race, age or among all educational backgrounds," she said. And although most victims are women, men too can be victims of domestic abuse.

Margaret Hall said she plans to attend the march.

"It's an issue that's so overlooked," she said.

"It's not like breast cancer, where researchers are trying to find a cure. This is something we do to each other, and nothing will be discovered in a lab or test tube to stop this."

You can reach Shawn D. Lewis at (248) 647-8825 or slewis@detnews.com.

Tuesday, October 11, 2005

Freman Hendrix's son arrested in domestic violence case

Incident may tarnish Detroit mayoral hopeful's image of having a scandal-free family.

By David Josar and Lisa M. Collins / The Detroit News

The son of mayoral candidate Freman Hendrix was arrested early Monday in Ann Arbor and was to be arraigned today on a charge of domestic violence, police and family members said.

Hendrix, flanked by his wife and daughter, told reporters outside his Rosedale Park home on Monday about the arrest but said he doesn't know details and hasn't been allowed to speak with his son, Stephen Hendrix, 21, an undergraduate at the University of Michigan Business School. "This incident will no doubt become a public issue," said Hendrix, who canceled his campaign appearances for the rest of the day.

Stephen Hendrix was to be charged with domestic violence, a misdemeanor.

During a mayoral election debate last month, Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick challenged Hendrix on whether any members of his family had been arrested. Kilpatrick later said the question was rhetorical, and he knew of no incidents involving Hendrix's family. At the time, Hendrix said no one in his family had ever been arrested, and a check of court records confirmed that statement.

"While I don't have any ... details and haven't been allowed to talk to my son, I love him and care about him and believe in his character," Hendrix said.

Hendrix has enjoyed the reputation of having a solid family and background "without issue or blemish," said Eric Foster, a partner in Urban Consulting Group, which represents candidates running for political office.

"I think this will tarnish the image a little a bit," Foster said. "At the end of the day, neither Hendrix nor Kilpatrick are totally responsible for what their family or friends will do.

"You can't control everyone's actions. You can control your actions, and you can put forth an image as best you can."

You can reach David Josar at (313) 222-2073 or djosar@detnews.com.

Mayoral Candidate's Son Arrested For Domestic Incident

University Of Michigan Student Being Held At Washtenaw County Jail

POSTED: 3:35 pm EDT October 10, 2005

DETROIT -- The campaign for Freman Hendrix was put on hold Monday after the Detroit mayoral candidate's 21-year-old son was arrested for a domestic incident, Local 4 reported. The incident apparently involved Hendrix's son, Stephen, a student at the University of Michigan School of Business, and an 18-year-old female, who is not a student at the school, the station reported.

Local 4 sources confirmed that Stephen Hendrix was taken into custody at about 1:30 a.m. Monday at his off-campus apartment in Ann Arbor. Sources said Hendrix is accused of a simple assault, meaning there were no weapons used and no major injuries incurred, according to the station's reports.

Hendrix's red Monte Carlo, which was parked outside of the apartment complex, had its windows smashed, but it was not known if the damage was related to the domestic incident, the station reported.

Freman Hendrix -- with his wife Elaine and daughter Erin at his side -- held a news conference on Monday afternoon to discuss the allegations.

The Washtenaw County Sheriff's Department said they were trying to facilitate a phone call between the mayoral candidate and his son. Hendrix was not allowed to talk to his son earlier on Monday because of the jail's procedure to only allow professional visits and/or visits from clergy members.

"We haven't had a chance to speak with him personally so we have no idea of the details regarding this allegation," Hendrix said. "We love our son very much and we believe very much in his character."

Hendrix cancelled scheduled campaign appearances for Monday and Tuesday. The family also hired a lawyer to handle the case.

"This is a personal matter. It is a family matter, and as a result of that, I've made a decision to suspend my campaign for the remainder of the day and tomorrow while we work through this very important and very personal family issue," Hendrix said.

In an ominous nod to the misfortune, Hendrix's opponent, Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick, created controversy when he queried Hendrix during the last Detroit mayoral debate.

Kilpatrick told an Economic Club of Detroit audience in September that he had never been arrested.

Kilpatrick then added: "I just want to know, can Mr. Hendrix say the same thing?"

Stephen Hendrix is expected to appear in an Ann Arbor court at 10 a.m. on Tuesday for his arraignment on a misdemeanor charge, according to Local 4 reports.

Woman accused in slaying case

Tuesday, October 11, 2005

The Grand Rapids Press

GRAND RAPIDS

A 47-year-old Grand Rapids woman accused of killing her live-in boyfriend Sunday was to be arraigned today on multiple charges. Cynthia Mills was identified in Grand Rapids District Court records as the suspect in the slaying of Donald Ace Thompson, 40. Police believe the suspect attacked Thompson inside their home, 846 Logan St. SE, and he stumbled outside. Thompson was found dead of stab wounds near the home. Police said they arrested Mills at Metropolitan Hospital, where she was being treated for a bad headache. Mills has no record of violent crimes, but has convictions for driving on a suspended license and creating a disturbance, court records show.

Building a happier future

TRACI ANDERSON-WEISENBACH, The Huron Daily Tribune 10/10/2005

BAD AXE — Sometime in the not-too-distant future, children will be arriving with their mothers at Huron County SafePlace domestic abuse shelter, seeking a safe, secure, reliable environment. On top of that, they'll be getting a place of their own where they can play and explore, thanks to Horizon Alternative Learning Center students, among others.

Thirteen Horizon students helped build a playscape for SafePlace, thanks to an \$800 grant from the Huron County Community Foundation Youth Advisory Committee. The students and SafePlace Board of Directors agreed on the playscape kit, and the process to build it began Sept. 6, said Rebecca Leipprandt, student services specialist.

The process started by excavating a 32 by 32 foot area, which took four hours. Students from Ron Klebba's construction/building technology course at the Huron Area Technical Center cut all of the wood and assembled some of the pieces to the playscape, such as the swingset.

Leipprandt said it took a total of 10 hours (two hours per afternoon over five days) to assemble the rest of the playscape. On Friday, the students spread mulch around the playscape as the final step.

The fun playscape includes a swingset, a slide, a climbing wall, monkey bars, and more. SafePlace Executive Director Tamara Richardson offered the students lunch on Friday in appreciation of their hard work on the project.

"The community has been so involved in the project," Richardson said. "(The students) did an amazing job. The children will be so excited. They'll be safe and free to laugh and play and be children."

She said families are expected to start arriving at SafePlace in November.

Last year, Horizon students conducted a spaghetti dinner fund-raising event at The Pasta House in Kinde. They raised \$3,800, which was donated to SafePlace.

"This year, they wanted to expand on what they did last year," Leipprandt said. "They wanted to do something for the children. We sought out grant money to pay (for the project)."

She said David Smith, a SafePlace board member, wrote the grant.

Horizon students are proud of the project.

"It was fun," said Erica Czewski of Ubly. "It feels good that I helped somebody."

"It was for a good cause," said Mary Hughes of Ubly. "It feels like we got something accomplished."

fun, but it was hard," said Kieth Harris of Port Hope. "It feels good to know the kids will be playing on something we made."

"I liked doing (this project) for the kids," said Josh Bishop of Harbor Beach. "I learned about teamwork and about building."

Other Horizon students who participated in the playscape project include Chris Strough, Steven Stormzand, Jill Wagner, Elma Bucholtz, Derek Block, Barrett Hurren, Jessica Osantoski, Nick Manial, and Stacey Woznicska.

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Artwork serves as domestic abuse therapy

The Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame exhibit "Expressions of Healing and Hope" features artwork by sexual and domestic abuse survivors.

About a dozen artists will display their work in various media including painting, sculpture and photography. Art as a method of therapy has allowed many survivors a way of expressing their feelings and coming to terms with the violence that has affected them. October has been designated Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

The exhibit will be on display at the Michigan Women's Historical Center's Belen Art Gallery beginning Saturday (exhibit opening 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.) through Jan. 15. It is presented by the Michigan Women's Historical Center, the MSU Sexual Assault Crisis and Safety Education Program, and End Violent Encounters (EVE) Inc. For more information call 484-1880 or 355-9320.

A reception featuring music, poetry reading, and refreshments will be held from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday at Magdalena's Tea House, 2006 E. Michigan Ave. Suggested donation is \$5-\$25. All proceeds will benefit survivors served by programs at the MSU Sexual Assault Crisis and Safety Education Program and EVE Inc.

People News appears Sunday through Friday. Have an item about people in and around Lansing to contribute? Please mail items to Vicki Dozier, People News, Lansing State Journal, 120 E. Lenawee St., Lansing, MI 48919, fax them to her at 377-1298 or e-mail them to vdozier@lsj.com.

Oct 11, 7:14 AM EDT

New SIDS Policy Recommends Pacifiers

By LINDSEY TANNER
AP Medical Writer

CHICAGO (AP) -- Babies should be offered pacifiers at bedtime, and they should sleep in their parents' room - but not in their beds - in order to lessen the risk of sudden infant death syndrome, the nation's largest group of pediatricians says.

Both measures may help keep babies from slumbering too deeply - a problem for infants prone to SIDS, said Dr. Rachel Moon, who helped draft the new recommendations on SIDS prevention. They were prepared for release Monday at the annual meeting of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The death rate from SIDS has fallen sharply in recent years, now that parents are warned not to let their babies sleep on their stomachs or amid fluffy bedding or stuffed toys. But it remains the leading cause of death in U.S. infants between ages 1 month and 1 year, killing more than 2,000 U.S. babies each year, and new tactics are needed to fight it, the academy said.

SIDS is defined as a sudden death of an infant, often while sleeping, that remains unexplained even after an autopsy and death scene examination.

Some breast-feeding proponents have advocated letting infants share their parents' bed to facilitate nighttime nursing and have opposed pacifier use because of concern that the devices might interfere with nursing.

But the academy is a longtime supporter of breast-feeding, and the new policy was crafted with that in mind. It recommends delaying pacifier use for breast-fed infants during the first month of life - when SIDS risks are low - "to ensure that breast-feeding is firmly established." And it says placing cribs near the parents' bed makes breast-feeding more convenient. Infants may be brought into the bed to nurse, but should be returned to their cribs afterward, the policy says. Pacifiers offered at bedtime should not be reinserted if they fall out during sleep, should not be coated in sweet substances, and should not be forced upon infants who refuse them, the policy says.

The new policy, which updates the academy's 2000 SIDS guidelines, also says that the only recommended sleep position for infants is on their backs. Letting babies sleep on their sides, considered a less favorable option in the old policy, is now considered too risky to even be considered an option, because infants could roll over to their stomachs.

In 1992, 4,660 U.S. infant deaths were attributed to SIDS. That annual number fell to about 2,800 in 1998, thanks at least partly to the government-sponsored "Back to Sleep" campaign launched nationwide in 1994. By 2002, the reported number had dropped to 2,295.

"Over 2,000 babies a year are still dying. We should be able to do something about that," said Dr. John Kattwinkel of the University of Virginia, chairman of the academy's SIDS task force. Doctors think actual numbers are higher because some true SIDS deaths are being blamed on other causes, said Moon, a SIDS researcher at Children's National Medical Center in Washington, D.C. Data suggest, for example, that accidental suffocation, which is hard to distinguish from SIDS, has increased in recent years, Moon said.

Doctors aren't sure about SIDS causes but a prevailing theory suggests that brain stem abnormalities affecting arousal reflexes leave some babies vulnerable when faced with

challenges during deep sleep, including overheating and breathing hampered by pillows, stuffed animals or other soft objects. Babies sleeping on their stomachs are at risk because they sleep more deeply and their airway risks being partly obstructed.

Laura Reno, spokeswoman for First Candle/SIDS Alliance, a national advocacy group, said her organization strongly supports the new recommendations.

"We just want to reduce as much risk as possible," said Reno, who lost a baby son to SIDS 21 years ago, long before stomach-sleeping and soft bedding were known risk factors.

"He was sleeping on his tummy on top of a sheepskin. If I had just known then what we know now," she said. "It's a devastating thing for parents and guilt is strongly associated with these deaths."

The academy's new recommendations are based on new research, including studies that have suggested that sucking pacifiers might help keep vulnerable infants from slumbering too deeply to rouse themselves.

Dr. Stephen Sheldon, director of the sleep medicine center at Chicago's Children's Memorial Hospital, said pacifiers also enhance babies' swallowing and are an age-appropriate habit.

While pacifier use can increase the risk of ear infections, these infections are less common during the first year of life - when the SIDS risk is highest - than later on, the academy said.

The policy recommends pacifier use throughout the first year but not beyond.

Pacifier use in older children may increase risks for teeth misalignment, but using them in infancy is not a problem, said Dr. Paul Reggiardo, a Huntington Beach, Calif., dentist and past president of the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry.

"These are from our point of view appropriate recommendations," Reggiardo said.

Twin Boy Dies After Being Found In Pool

Sister Remains In Critical Condition

POSTED: 5:08 pm EDT October 10, 2005

A Birmingham boy died after he and his twin sister were found in the family's swimming pool. The 16-month-old toddlers were taken to Beaumont Hospital after being pulled from the pool at their home on Stanley Street last Wednesday night.

The boy died this weekend, while his sister remains in critical condition.

It was not clear who discovered the pair in the pool. An alarm system to warn of the back door opening did not sound, according to Local 4 reports.

Police are still investigating, but consider it an accident.

Home health care worker charged with sexual assault

By DREW ACRE Argus-Press Staff Writer

Saturday, October 8, 2005 8:35 AM EDT

CORUNNA - A 50-year-old home health care worker is facing felony charges for allegedly fondling a 10-year-old child who regularly visited one of his clients.

Clifford Lee VanStrate Jr. of Owosso was arraigned Wednesday in Shiawassee County 66th District Court before court magistrate Kevin McKay on two felony counts of second degree criminal sexual conduct. Each are 15-year felonies.

VanStrate had a not guilty plea entered on his behalf.

He is scheduled for an Oct. 19 preliminary hearing before judge Ward L. Clarkson. Bond was set for VanStrate at \$30,000.

VanStrate, an independently contracted home health care worker, provided health care services to at least three clients in the Owosso area, according to a relative of the alleged victim. The 10-year-old victim was friends with one of VanStrate's clients and was allegedly molested by VanStrate in September, the relative also said.

Susan Fulton, director of the Department of Human Services for Shiawassee and Livingston counties, said concerned home health care clients will soon be able to access a registry of qualified direct care workers. The registry is currently under development by a newly formed governmental agency called QC3.

For more information on the registry, visit their Web site at www.mQcc.org.

Former foster parent sent to prison for CSC

By Dale Killingbeck, Cadillac News

October 11, 2005

CADILLAC - A former Manton foster parent faces up to 15 years in prison for a sexual relationship with a girl placed in his care.

Dennis Truair Jarvis, 34, was sentenced in Wexford County Circuit Court to 95 months to 180 months in prison for criminal sexual conduct, third degree, stemming from his relationship with a victim who was 12 and 13 years old at the time of the incidents.

Jarvis entered into a plea agreement in the case last month that resulted in the Wexford County prosecutor dropping 10 counts of criminal sexual conduct, first degree.

Prior to sentencing, defense attorney Gerald Chefalo argued that the presentence report reflected alleged predatory conduct by Jarvis and that was not the case.

"We argue against predatory conduct in this situation," he said. "There was no indication of threats."

Assistant Prosecutor Julie Valice argued that Jarvis' role as a foster parent and abuse of that role revealed predatory acts.

"I think there is ample evidence here that this child was groomed by this defendant," she said. "I'm convinced this was all for the purpose of his own self gratification."

Corwin ruled that the presentence report was scored correctly.

Chefalo told the judge that he has represented Jarvis in all of his court appearances related to his conduct with the victim in three counties.

"I don't believe Dennis Jarvis is a bad man," Chefalo said. "This is an individual who is capable for remorse and of learning of their mistakes that he has made."

Valice called the case "egregious." She said a letter written by Jarvis stating that he was not the first person to have a relationship with the victim essentially "blames her."

Jarvis stood before Corwin in his Michigan Department of Corrections blue- and orange-striped uniform. He was sentenced to eight to 15 years in prison in August from Grand Traverse County for criminal sexual conduct, third degree and three to five years in prison for attempted kidnap/child enticement.

Jarvis apologized prior to Corwin imposing his sentence.

"I want to apologize to (the victim) for all the decisions that I made. I do accept all responsibility," he said. "I want to apologize to my family, to my friends, the church and to my community."

Corwin gave him 145 days credit for time served and ordered him to pay \$120 in costs.

October 06, 2005

Duval sentenced to prison for CSC

A Houghton Lake man was sentenced Tuesday in 34th Circuit Court to 17 to 33 years in prison on a criminal sexual conduct charge.

Judge Michael Baumgartner sentenced Mark A. Duval, 42, to serve a minimum of 210 months in prison, with credit for 55 days, and a maximum of 400 months (33 1/3 years). He was also ordered to pay \$1,000 in fines and costs, a \$500 attorney fee, \$60 to the Crime Victim Rights Fund and \$60 in State Minimum Costs.

State Police had charged Duval with crimes committed against a 10-year-old girl May 1-31, and he had pleaded guilty to one count of first degree criminal sexual conduct, second offense.

Duval, who was convicted of second degree criminal sexual conduct in 1998, was arrested as he rode his bicycle near his home on Heightsview Drive after police gained evidence that he had had sex with the victim twice and had previously had sex with another minor.

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Man says he learned girl's real age only after tryst

GRAND BLANC TOWNSHIP

THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION

Tuesday, October 11, 2005

By Bryn Mickle

bmickle@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6383

GRAND BLANC TWP. - A township man could face rape charges after he allegedly had sex with an Oak Park girl he met on the Internet.

The man, 25, told police the girl lied about her age, telling him she was 19 when, in fact, she was a 13-year-old eighth-grader.

The pair allegedly met in a Detroit chat room and decided to get together over the weekend, said township Detective Melissa Hodge.

He picked her up in Oak Park on Saturday and drove her back to his apartment, Hodge said.

"He brought her back and they had a night," said Hodge.

The girl's parents filed a runaway report when they realized she was missing.

When she called home to assure her parents she was fine, Hodge said the man discovered the girl's real age.

"She admitted she lied about her age," said Hodge.

But ignorance may not save the Pontiac shopworker from charges.

Police plan to seek criminal sexual conduct charges against the man today.

"When you meet someone on the Internet, ask for ID," said Hodge. "You need to protect yourself."

The case is a reminder

that parents need to monitor their child's trips into cyberspace.

"It's always best for parents to be watching their kids," said Hodge.

Computers from the girl's home were seized, as was a computer belonging to a friend of the suspect.

The girl is not expected to face any criminal charges.

The man is being held at the Genesee County Jail pending charges.

Police: Men Approach Local Middle School Girl

School Principal To Send Letter Home To Parents

POSTED: 12:45 pm EDT October 10, 2005

DETROIT -- An 11-year-old girl was approached by two men on her way to school Monday morning, according to police.

The sixth-grade student at Lessinger middle school said the two men pulled up next to her in a car while she was walking in the area of Joy Road and Evergreen on Detroit's west side.

The girl screamed and ran to her school when the men began to approach her, according to police.

School officials contacted authorities and the girl's mother, Dabrina McDonald.

"People are out here trying to get their education. What are you attacking these children for? Leave them alone," McDonald said.

Police are searching for two black men in their early 20s who were driving a navy blue two-door Pontiac Sunbird, the station reported.

The principal at Lessinger said a letter would be sent home to parents on Monday to notify them of the incident and establish a neighborhood watch.

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Tuesday, October 11, 2005

Striving to keep children safe Abuse-council director gives back

By HILLARY WHITCOMB JESSE
Times Herald

In Sally Straffon's family, those who had good things happen to them expected they'd soon help good things come to others.

Straffon, 63, of Port Huron grew up as an only child in Mio. Her parents were great community activists.

"When everything was good, you needed to give back," she said.

Straffon has passed that expectation and enjoyment along to her husband, daughters and grandchildren, who today help at many of the events she leads as director of the St. Clair County Child Abuse/ Neglect Council.

She has been with the council for 21 years. "I'm a doer," she said. When something happens, I want to fix it, I want to deal with it."

Straffon got her bachelor's degree in social work in the 1960s and started working for probate court in St. Clair County in 1963 as a juvenile probation counselor, helping delinquent girls.

She still sees some of those girls, now grandmothers, around town.

While staying home raising her two daughters - one works in marketing and the other is a school social worker in Port Huron - she dove into the world of Girl Scouts, Parent-Teacher Association and even fund-raising for the American Cancer Society.

THIS YEAR'S AWARDS

ST. CLAIR COUNTY CHILD ABUSE/ NEGLECT COUNCIL

The council won two awards Monday from the **Children's Trust Fund of Michigan**. The council is a designated local council of the trust fund but is independent and not financially supported by it.

Mike DeLong of Port Huron received the 2005 volunteer of the year award for his work with the council and its "It Shouldn't Hurt to be a Child" campaign.

The **St. Clair County Child Abuse/Neglect Council** received the trust fund's 2005 public-awareness award for three years of radio broadcasting, billboards, public-service announcements, "Never Shake a Baby" and Blue Ribbon campaigns and more.

A CLOSER LOOK

SALLY STRAFFON, 64

RESIDENCE:Port Huron

OCCUPATION:Director of the St. Clair County Child Abuse/Neglect Council (part time).

EDUCATION:Master's degree in counseling from Oakland University in Rochester; bachelor's degree in social work from Michigan State University in East Lansing.

FAMILY:Husband, Ray, retired Port Huron city planner and planning consultant with Acheson Ventures; two adult daughters; two grandchildren.

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Michael McCartan

NEWSMAKERS

ABOUT THIS SERIES

News makers is a weekly series looking at the local people behind the stories making news.

Going back to work, she wanted to find an environment that gave her the space to keep up with the family responsibilities. A part-time job as director of the council seemed to fit.

It still does today. The council consistently has won awards from the Children's Trust Fund of Michigan, the organization to which councils such as the abuse/neglect one belong. Straffon is proud of the community that makes it happen.

"I have done nothing but live long enough to gather wonderful friends and community members around this one cause," she said.

Michael McCartan, executive director of St. Clair County Community Mental Health, has known Straffon for years and been part of the council's silent auctions, Roof-sit and dinner fund-raisers.

He said Straffon's dynamic, outgoing personality has given the council sustaining leadership.

"She will talk to anybody, any time, any place, unabashedly" about the cause of preventing child abuse, McCartan said.

Contact Hillary Whitcomb Jesse at (810) 989-6277 or hjesse@gannett.com.

Originally published October 11, 2005

Roof-sit raises \$18,000 for child advocacy center

*By JACKIE LEONE, Argus-Press Copy Desk Chief
Monday, October 10, 2005 10:21 AM EDT*

The news is good. With the tally for the Child Abuse Prevention Council of Shiawassee County and the Shiawassee-Owosso Kiwanis Club second annual "Coins for Kids Roof Sit" at close to \$18,000 and still growing, the Child Advocacy Center of Shiawassee County fund-raiser has been deemed a success.

"The committee is pleased with the almost \$18,000 raised during this event," said committee member Robin Stechschulte. "With relief efforts for Hurricane Katrina victims going on and the road being closed at the railroad tracks just past McDonald's, we were unsure how successful the event would be. The community showed that they support the children by giving generously."

The Child Abuse Prevention Council of Shiawassee County and the Shiawassee-Owosso Kiwanis Club joined forces and purchased the building at 1216 W. Main St. in Owosso for the child advocacy center in October 2004. The down payment was made with the proceeds from the first roof-sit, which raised more than \$25,000, and a large contribution from both groups.

The child advocacy center is a child-friendly facility where children go to be interviewed about potential abuse and/or neglect. The center allows for one interview in one place at one time, rather than several times at various agencies. This reduces the trauma the child experiences.

According to Stechschulte, "Future goals are to provide a medical room for examinations, rather than the child going to Lansing for an exam, which is the current practice, and counseling services for the child and non-offending family members."

Michael Ash and Sara Edwards were co-chairs of the 2005 roof-sit. In addition to Stechschulte, the planning committee also included Jeannie Philips, Janet Smith, Dan Stewart, Ellen Lynch, Paula Foster, Mike Wallace, Karen Van Epps, Julie Omer, Susan Saab, Joe Scotcher and Doug Saunders.

"A lot of behind the scenes planning goes into a big event like this," Stechschulte noted. Bob and Mary Van Poppelen contributed \$1,000 to the child advocacy center, as well as donating use of the roof at the Owosso McDonald's restaurant. Z92.5 The Castle disc jockey "Dan the Man" Stewart was lifted atop the roof the morning of Sept. 23, where he remained until Sept. 25, when the roof-sit concluded. During his stint on the roof, Stewart broadcast live on-air all weekend and interviewed many guest speakers from around Shiawassee County who are experts in the area of children, including school principals, police personnel, judges and survivors of child abuse.

"Dan showed his passion for helping these children by giving facts and statistics and pleading with the community to help these children," Stechschulte said of Stewart's efforts.

Z92.5 The Castle provided the live coverage during the event, promotion ahead of time and provided public service announcements throughout the year to help raise awareness for child abuse and neglect. "Helping the children of Shiawassee County has become a mission for them, as well," commented Stechschulte.

Event sponsors contributing \$1,000 or more included Applebee's Neighborhood Grill and Bar, A.O. Smith Electrical Products Company, Memorial Healthcare of Owosso and Wal-Mart.

Foundation level sponsors, contributing \$500 or more, were the Fraternal Order of Police, Shiawassee

Anesthesia Services and United Parcel Service.

Building supporters, contributing \$150 or more, were Mike and Lisa Ash, Baker College of Owosso, Cadwallader-Lord-Hahn, Chemical Bank, Dr. and Mrs. Andy Barclay, Greg Gerding and Republic Bank-North Shiawassee Street branch, Republic Bank-Main Street branch, Indian Trails, Meijer Inc., Re-MAX of Owosso, Shiawassee County Bar Association, Stechschulte Gas & Oil, Trinity Counseling Service, Van Epps and Van Epps - Attorneys at Law, Wolverine Sign Works, Wolf Communications, Inc. and Young Chevrolet Cadillac.

Shiawassee County Department of Human Services personnel took up a collection and donated \$260 to the roof-sit effort. "These people see these children and their families first-hand and know that we have a need for a child advocacy center," commented Stechschulte.

According to Stechschulte, "Many, many others supported the event with contributions of \$100 or more." These include A.G. Edwards, Jennings-Lyons Chapel, Sobaks Home Medical and South 401 Restaurant.

The women from the Clark station took pledges and donated almost \$100, plus brought the volunteers fresh coffee; the Frank Sprague for Mr. Owosso Committee came through and donated almost \$100 in cash, Big Boy of Owosso brought a Big Boy bank and poured the contents into the roof-sit bucket, Lori Bailey wrote a "large check" to the advocacy center and employees of the Nail Boutique dropped in money," Stechschulte counted off, also noting "as well as many others who contributed without acknowledging who they are."

Doug Edwards of Edwards Sign & Printing designed and printed the roof-sit T-shirts, Felker's Tent donated the use of tents, John's Jolly Jump provided the children's moon jump, McLaren Rent It provided the lift truck, Stewart Graphics helped with T-shirts and promotion, Stock Building Supply (Bernie Lynch) provided the lumber and built the stairs on the roof.

In addition, Willoughby Press donated the flyers, St. Paul Catholic Church and the Shiawassee Family YMCA allowed the use of their parking lots, Russes Sign Rental & Auto Sales donated the use of a sign to direct people because of the road being closed and the Shia-Alley Clown Klub clowns came and entertained the children.

Also, The Home Depot donated kits for the children to put together, Janet Smith of Trinity Counseling Services dressed as a mime and also planned many of the children's events and Ron and Mary Mallory and Kathryn Kendall brought the animals for the petting zoo.

Fire trucks and the fire house were brought to the roof-sit on Saturday, along with personnel to oversee the children, the Shiawassee Regional Education Service District provided a bus that was filled with returnable cans and bottles and the Owosso Public Schools administration and athletic department helped out.

"What incredible support from the community." Stechschulte enthused.

Roof-sit 2006 is already in the works and anyone interested in getting involved in the planning - or serving on a committee or volunteering at the child advocacy center - should contact executive director Ellen Lynch at 723-5877.

Grandparents Given Rights by Ohio Court

By JAMES DAO
The New York Times

Published: October 11, 2005

Ohio's highest court unanimously ruled yesterday that the grandparents of an 8-year-old girl must be allowed to visit her over the objections of her father, upholding the constitutionality of a state law granting nonparents visitation rights to children.

The decision by the Supreme Court of Ohio comes at a time when parents across the nation have been challenging the constitutionality of such laws. While courts in some states, like Florida and Washington, have struck down those laws, courts in others have upheld them.

The Ohio court's ruling came in a bitter legal battle over Brittany Collier, who was born to a single mother, Renee Harrold, in 1997. She was raised for the first two years of her life by her mother, who lived with her parents, court records show.

In 1999, Ms. Harrold died of cancer, and her parents, Gary and Carol Harrold, were granted temporary legal custody of Brittany.

But in 2002, a court awarded custody to her father, Brian S. Collier, who removed her from the Harrolds' home several months later. The Harrolds then petitioned a court for visitation rights, setting off a seesawing legal struggle that ultimately brought the case before Ohio's highest court. Ohio law says that in cases where a parent of an unmarried minor dies, courts may grant grandparents and other relatives of the deceased parent visitation rights if those visits are deemed "in the best interest" of the child.

Mr. Collier argued that Ohio's law was overly broad and infringed on his constitutionally protected rights as a parent. He cited a 2000 United States Supreme Court ruling, Troxel v. Granville, in which the court found that a Washington State law went too far in permitting a judge to order visiting rights for grandparents over a mother's objections.

Yesterday, the Ohio Supreme Court rejected Mr. Collier's argument, saying that Ohio's law was more narrowly drawn than Washington's and conformed with the Troxel ruling. The Washington law allowed any person to petition for visitation rights, while Ohio's law specifies that only parents and other relatives of a deceased parent can petition for visitation.

The decision, written by Justice Alice Robie Resnick, also took into special account the fact that Brittany had lived in the Harrolds' home for her first five years.

"The facts of this case clearly warrant granting grandparent visitation" to the Harrolds, Justice Resnick said.

It was not clear whether Mr. Collier would appeal to the federal courts. Lawyers for Mr. Collier and the Harrolds did not return calls for comment yesterday.

Ronald W. Nelson, a Kansas lawyer who specializes in family law, said he considered it unlikely that the United States Supreme Court would hear another case on grandparents' visitation rights, saying that federal courts traditionally have allowed the states to decide such rules.

"They got involved in Troxel because they wanted to reassert a balance that gives the parents the primary right to raise their children," said Mr. Nelson, vice chairman of the child custody committee of the American Bar Association's family law section. "But now that they have said something on that, it is unlikely that they will get back into that thicket."

Richard S. Victor, a Michigan lawyer who founded the Grandparents Rights Organization, a nonprofit group that advocates visitation rights for grandparents, said the Troxel ruling shifted the burden for proving the best interest of a child from parents to grandparents. But it did not strike down laws that allow grandparents visitation rights under prescribed circumstances.

"This ruling shows that Ohio's law met the threshold," Mr. Victor said. "And that is the theme of what is going on around the country

Detroit Free Press

October 11, 2005

COLUMBUS, OHIO

Grandparents get visits

The Ohio Supreme Court ruled Monday that grandparents can be awarded the right to visit their grandchildren over a parent's objections.

The court unanimously ruled in favor of grandparents who wanted to visit a granddaughter after the girl's mother died of cancer in 1999 when the girl was 2.

The girl's parents were never married. Her father, Brian Collier, said the grandparents, Gary and Carol Harrold, tried to turn his daughter against him.

IN BRIEF

Ann Arbor News

Tuesday, October 11, 2005

Teen faces charges in group home fire

A 15-year-old girl was expected to be charged with lighting a fire that extensively damaged the basement of a group home for troubled youth in Ann Arbor on Friday evening.

The girl was being held in the Washtenaw County Juvenile Detention Center on a charge of arson of an occupied dwelling. Police arrested three other girls, ages 12 and 15, but they were later released to the staff at the Huron Services for Youth facility.

Firefighters responded to the two-story home in the 1300 block of South Seventh Street near the West Stadium Boulevard intersection about 6:30 p.m. Five teenage residents and two adult supervisors were inside the home when the fire was reported, but they evacuated by the time firefighters arrived. One of the female supervisors was taken to the University of Michigan Medical Center for smoke inhalation.

Staff members said the suspect and other girls went to the basement, then ran upstairs and said the house was on fire several minutes later.

Police said the 15-year-old girl admitted to lighting covers on the couch on fire with a lighter and said she was angry for being disciplined, reports said. Damage was estimated at \$50,000.

Judge named for trial of ex-court guardian Zwick

10/11
1B

LANSING STATE JOURNAL

CHARLOTTE — Ingham County Family Court Judge Richard Garcia will oversee the Eaton County contempt trial of former court guardian Charles Zwick, said Mike Kutas, Eaton

County circuit and probate courts administrator.

Garcia was appointed by the state court's administrators office after Eaton County Chief Probate Judge Michael Skinner disqualified himself because he'd already issued related judgments against Zwick.

Zwick remains jailed on charges he mishandled more than \$630,000 from two elderly Lansing sisters' accounts.

The longtime Charlotte attorney faces up to 30 days in jail on the charges.

A trial date has been set for Nov. 8.

Tuesday, October 11, 2005

Making Michigan Smarter

How dropouts can recover and succeed

Native American overcomes poverty to earn degrees and oversee casinos

By Aaron Payment / Special to The Detroit News

If you drop out of high school, it doesn't have to spell the end to a successful future. Never give up on getting a good education.

I should know. I overcame adverse conditions, got into college, ended up with a bachelor's degree and a master's degree and now oversee an American Indian tribe that runs several big businesses.

Like many Native Americans who lived in the poor, rural Indian community that is now the reservation headquarters for the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, I started out life in sheer poverty. My family had no indoor plumbing until 1980. My tribe was not yet recognized until 1975, when I was just 10 years old.

Early school experience

The public school I attended was segregated, with Native students bused from across town to the "Indian school," so nicknamed because enrollment was nearly 80 percent American Indian.

When I was in the fourth grade, the public schools experimented on us by offering an "open concept" curriculum loosely based on the Montessori model. But instead of a teacher-student ratio of 1-5, ours was 1-30. Mostly we went unsupervised.

Though a few from my age group did graduate high school, my academic preparation was so poor I entered middle school not knowing the basic parts of speech, how to write a sentence or even how to do simple short division. I was obviously socially promoted to high school, where I earned less than a D- average before dropping out at age 15.

Reaching for college

After two years of working jobs including groundskeeper, orange picker and waiter, I asked the Lake Superior State Upward Bound staff to help me enter college. Qualifying for the Michigan Indian tuition waiver, I took a full year of remedial classes and graduated with a 3.3 grade point average in four and a half years after transferring to Northern Michigan University.

Two-and-a-half years later, I earned a master's degree in public administration from Northern Michigan with a GPA of 3.72. I then gained admission into a doctoral program in political science at Michigan State University and completed more than half of the course work with a 3.3 GPA.

I also spent one semester as a traveling scholar at the University of Michigan studying applied regression analysis and earned a 4.0 GPA.

Degrees lead to job

My doctoral studies were interrupted in 1994, when I applied for and was hired as an instructor at Lake Superior State University. While there, I wrote the course and taught political science research and statistics.

In 1996, I was humbled to win election to my tribe's governing board on my first try by receiving a record number of votes. In 2004, I was elected as the third chairperson in my tribe's history by defeating a 17-year incumbent.

As tribal chairperson, I now provide executive oversight over my tribe, our five Upper Peninsula casinos and our Greektown Casino in Detroit. Our tribe has total assets worth \$590 million and more than 4,000 Michigan employees.

Life as leader and executive

As a fiscal conservative, I focus on reducing operational costs with the goal of preserving and enhancing services for tribal members where they live, including those in downstate Michigan. With funding reductions from the federal government, the way to solidify and expand services is to reinvent our tribal government and to operate more efficiently.

As a high school dropout who has gone on to earn a graduate degree, I have some observations of the public education system. In 2002, a 10-year MSU study examined the educational experiences of Native Americans from my community. The study found that during the 1990s, the dropout rate was 47 percent with Native Americans tracked to a noncollege curriculum at a rate nearly three times that of non-Natives.

After the results were presented publicly, I stood and noted that five other Native Americans in the room and I had graduate degrees after having failed the public school system. Obviously, something is deficient in our education, but clearly it is neither our ability nor our potential. The school system needs to expect more from our children, and our students should expect more of themselves.

For several years, I served as president of our tribe's Joseph K. Lumsden Charter School. The MEAP scores at our school exceed those of the local public schools in almost every category. Twice we have won the Michigan Governor's Golden Apple Award.

I am not willing to give up on public education, but my people cannot wait any longer for educational opportunities to improve in the conventional system. Students shouldn't accept educational failure. They can overcome the odds. But the system needs to change as well.

Aaron Payment is the elected chairperson of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, the largest of Michigan's 12 federally recognized Indian tribes, which is co-sponsoring the Your Child Culture of Education study.

Mail letters to Letters, 615 W. Lafayette, Detroit, MI 48226. Fax them to (313) 222-6417. Or e-mail them to letters@detnews.com.

Michigan Report

October 10, 2005

CAPITAL NOTEBOOK

P.S.C. SEEKS BIDS ON LOW-INCOME

ENERGY GRANTS: The Public Service Commission is seeking bids on using up to \$10 million in grants for energy efficiency projects for low-income households. The deadline for submitting requests for proposals is October 28.

“With the dramatic rise in natural gas prices, my colleagues and I are committed to making sure that these funds help make the homes of low-income people more energy efficient,” PSC chair Peter Lark said.

DN 10/11

Feds urged to boost heat fund for poor

BY KEVIN FREKING
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — Democratic lawmakers are urging the Bush administration to increase funding for a \$2 billion energy program to help the poor pay heating bills expected to increase about 47 percent this winter.

The energy assistance program helps low-income families, primarily the elderly and disabled, pay utility bills — about one-third of the total bill, on average. The money is disbursed through block grants to the states.

Energy Secretary Samuel Bodman said last week that additional money was “not on the agenda.” However, department spokesman Craig Stevens said Monday, “I think it’s an option on the table.”

Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass., says the program’s effect is diminishing because funding has not kept up with rising fuel prices.

Kerry unsuccessfully tried to attach an amendment to the defense appropriations bill last week that called for increasing funding to \$5.1 billion.

Kerry, citing Energy Department estimates, projected that families in the Midwest face a 69 percent to 77 percent increase in the price of natural gas, and a 39 percent to 43 percent increase for propane. Families in the South could expect a 17 percent to 18 percent increase in their electricity bills, and families in the Northeast could face a 29 percent to 33 percent increase in the price of heating oil, he said.

Fearing Heat Costs, Many Take Preventive Action

By PAM BELLUCK and SARAH KERSHAW
The New York Times

Published: October 11, 2005

BOSTON, Oct. 10 - The price of energy has soared so high that Carol Paige has all but given up dancing.

It was a favorite hobby, twice a week at clubs in Worcester, Mass., almost a 50-mile drive from her home. For Ms. Paige, the drive is now a luxury. She is worried about a more basic need: heating her home. In the face of the surging cost of natural gas and home heating oil, Ms. Paige, a 60-year-old social worker who lives alone, has made other cutbacks, too.

She cut out the monitoring system for her burglar alarm, cancelled her garbage pickup and takes her trash to the dump herself, and plans to discontinue her Internet service.

And last week, fearful of a heating oil bill that could soar to \$1,500 this winter from about \$1,000 last year, Ms. Paige had a wood stove insert installed in her living-room fireplace at her home in Ashburnham, about 50 miles northwest of Boston. She plans to cut wood for the stove herself from trees on her property and from leftovers at nearby logging sites.

"I have a little electric chain saw," Ms. Paige said. "I'm just trying to keep this house going."

Sentiments like that are being echoed from Maine to Alaska as people, already grappling to keep up with the rising price of gasoline, have been further stunned by predictions of the skyrocketing cost of staying warm this winter.

People who heat their homes with natural gas will pay an average of 46 percent more this winter, with costs in some regions, like the Midwest, expected to be as high as 71 percent more, according to forecasts issued last month by the Department of Energy. Heating oil costs are expected to go up an average of 31 percent. And those figures were released before Hurricane Katrina made the situation worse.

Now, people across the country, as well as state and local governments and school districts, are scrambling to respond. Some are turning away from gas and oil, buying wood stoves, wood-

"When it comes down to it," Mr. Posey said, "we'll pay our heat, but something else is going to go unpaid."

That is not to say that everyone is in a fuel frenzy. Energy Department officials say fuel prices shot up because of Hurricane Katrina but will eventually come down. Some people, though, are changing energy sources because the sluggish response to the hurricane has raised questions about whether they can rely on things like oil and gas in an emergency.

Even though crude oil prices dropped slightly last week, officials in Washington are concerned. The energy secretary, Samuel W. Bodman, started a national conservation tour last week at a suburban Boston home-improvement store, demonstrating with Gov. Mitt Romney ways to conserve energy.

Guy Lamoureaux is doing a little bit of everything to save money. He bought a pellet stove for his home, an old farmhouse in Westminister, Mass. Mr. Lamoureaux, 27, said he had also installed new windows and insulation because "all my house had for insulation was newspapers from 1912." And for his 30-mile drive to his job at a grocery store, he swapped his gas-guzzling pickup truck for a used Ford Escort.

A poll conducted in late September for the National Oilheat Research Alliance, a consortium of oil companies, found that 28 percent of respondents planned to take steps this winter to better conserve energy, like installing new insulation, thermostats and furnaces or turning to stoves. Nearly a third said energy costs would cause them to cut back on holiday gifts and dining out. Low- and middle-income families are not the only ones feeling the squeeze. In Wayland, a well-off suburb of Boston, Energy Unlimited has been seeing a deluge of customers wanting wood or pellet stoves, said Dave Paillier, who works in sales and marketing.

"I would call it borderline panic," Mr. Paillier said. "A lot of people here have very large houses, and big sometimes equals cathedral ceilings or other things that are very hungry in terms of energy. I think a lot of people who look affluent might have bought the biggest house they could afford, and the sticker shock with the gas bills or oil bills can be more than they counted on."

That is what happened to Erik Stauber, a professor of veterinary medicine. Two years ago, he built a 4,000-square-foot dream house in Genesee, Idaho, with a vaulted ceiling, an atrium and 11 skylights. During the first winter there, Mr. Stauber, 69, said he and his wife were "shellshocked" that it cost \$2,500 to heat their home with propane, so last year they switched to a wood-burning stove.

Their costs dropped to \$1,000, but only one area of the house got warm enough to sleep in, and the labor of hauling and splitting the wood compelled them to switch two weeks ago to an electric-powered geothermal system, which draws heat from well water.

State officials, however, worry the most about low-income consumers, like Mary White, a single mother of three in the Dorchester section of Boston who is on disability because of a brain tumor. Ms. White, 47, a former utility company employee, received fuel assistance last year but still owes the gas company about \$1,800.

Ms. White said she feared that her heat would get shut off because she would not be able to pay the bill, let alone keep up with rising fuel costs. To save gas, she tries not to cook, feeding her children mostly food like peanut butter sandwiches.

"I'm really scared," Ms. White said. "I pray for another day of warm weather."

John Wells, who runs the fuel assistance program at Action for Boston Community

Development, said the maximum benefit of \$609 would not even fill an oil tank and, in a state where winter runs through April, would not last most customers past early February. His agency will install free solar-powered systems in some homes.

John Drew, the agency's vice president, said, "This is the most dangerous winter I've seen, and I was here during OPEC," referring to the oil embargo of the 1970's.

Governors of 28 states have asked for nearly \$1.3 billion in additional money for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program. Eight Midwestern states have started an energy conservation campaign. Some Massachusetts officials have called for making bulk purchases of heating oil or removing sales tax on insulation and energy-efficient furnaces.

Some schools are turning down thermostats, limiting bus service or hiring energy consultants. In Council, Idaho, the schools expect to halve their \$10,000 monthly heating bill with a new system that runs on wood chips produced when state crews thin trees along the highways. Last month, Gov. Sonny Perdue of Georgia closed the schools for two days because school buses were running out of diesel fuel.

In Marengo, Iowa, the county courthouse remains closed on Mondays to give its gas boilers an extra day off, and employees work four 10-hour days. In Marshalltown, Iowa, officials have traded traffic lights for stop signs at six intersections.

Some people are considering more drastic environmental changes like solar panels, wind turbines or straw insulation. The Northeast Sustainable Energy Association has had higher-than-usual attendance on tours of "green" homes from Delaware to Maine, said Anissa Sanborn, a program manager for the group.

Jack May of Canaan, Maine, recently bought a pellet stove and is considering solar power. "I'm not an environmentalist from the word go," Mr. May said. "I want to look at my bottom line."

"It was either give it to the oil company, \$4,000 a year, or buy a wood stove and have something to show for it after two years," he said.

Some suppliers of the stoves and the pellets and wood they burn are running out of inventory or hiring extra employees to meet the demand. In Walla Walla, Wash., Chris Neufeld, vice president of Blaze King Industries-USA, said his company had a backlog worth \$1 million for stoves that cost about \$2,000 apiece.

In Waverly, Ill., Don Magelitz, who sells corn stoves, is more than eight weeks behind on deliveries and has a backlog of 200 orders.

Consumer groups and some retailers warn that stoves are not for everyone, because they require money up front and take effort to use. But Ellen Berman, president of the Consumer Energy Council of America, said that when these or other conservation steps were chosen appropriately, people might find that "if they spend \$50 today, they'll reap hundreds or thousands in the future." That is what Mauricio Luzzi of Bayshore, N.Y., is counting on. Mr. Luzzi found a wood stove for \$300 on Craigslist last week, and he plans to burn wood scraps from his handyman business and search for downed trees along the roads he travels to construction sites.

"Give me the wood, I'll chop it up, I'll haul it off," Mr. Luzzi said. "We all know it's hurting everything. You raise the price of fuel, and everything goes up."

Granholt Talks Jobs with Michigan Communities; Emphasizes Urgency of Passing her Economic Plan

LANSING - In the first of a series of community conversations on the economy, Governor Jennifer M. Granholt today met with workers and parents in Saginaw and Mt. Pleasant to discuss Michigan's economy and her five-point plan to create jobs.

"This week's economic news should serve as another reminder that we cannot wait to create jobs, to diversify our economic base, or to send more of our children to college," said Granholt. "Our economy - and our citizens - demand urgency."

The Governor's economic proposal will ensure that Michigan businesses and workers can compete and win in the new global marketplace. Granholt has proposed legislation to restructure business taxes in Michigan in order to keep jobs here, fast-forward public infrastructure projects to create thousands of jobs today, match unemployed citizens with businesses that need workers right now, make college accessible to all, and invest up to \$2 billion in Michigan's 21st century economy.

Specifically, the Governor's economic plan includes:

- * restructuring business taxes in Michigan to keep jobs here.

The Michigan Jobs and Investment Act would provide a job-creating tax cut for business taxpayers, new tax credits for manufacturers and R&D companies and a rate cut for small businesses.

- * creating thousands of new jobs right now through needed infrastructure improvements.

The Governor's Jobs Today Initiative accelerates \$800 million in pollution cleanup and university and road upgrade projects. The Initiative also creates new tools that will upgrade schools, downtowns, and nursing homes.

- * matching out-of-work citizens with employers who need workers right now.

The MI Opportunity Partnership is a worker placement and training initiative that can place as many as 30,000 unemployed citizens in high-demand job vacancies this year. Since May, the Partnership has already identified 21,513 vacancies and matched 8,418 unemployed citizens with new jobs.

- * making college accessible to all.

Governor Granholt's proposed new Merit Scholarship award makes Michigan the first state to guarantee every Michigan student the opportunity to attend college. Every child who graduates from high school and completes two years of college, community college or apprenticeship training will be guaranteed a \$4,000 scholarship.

- * investing up to \$2 billion in Michigan's 21st century economy.

The Jobs for Michigan Fund will allow the state to invest up to \$2 billion in Michigan's economy over the next decade. This investment will create tens of thousands of good high-paying jobs of the future in high-growth industries such as advanced manufacturing, the life sciences, and alternative energy development - jobs that will keep our kids in Michigan and that will make our economy less reliant on the automotive industry.

The Governor announced her comprehensive proposal to restructure Michigan's economy and create jobs last February. More than eight months later, the Legislature has not yet passed any of the key provisions her economic plan.

"While legislators in Lansing are debating the merits of my economic plan, our citizens are continuing to struggle with the affects of a global economy," said Granholm. "Families in Michigan are feeling a major economic squeeze right now. They are crying out for action, and I want their voices to be heard in Lansing."

The Governor met with concerned parents, students, and unemployed citizens at the Bringer Inn in Saginaw and on the campus of Central Michigan University in Mt. Pleasant. She will hold similar community conversations in five other cities later this week and plans to continue her discussions with citizens across the state this month.

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Liberal Hopes Ebb in Post-Storm Poverty Debate

By JASON DePARLE
The New York Times

Published: October 11, 2005

WASHINGTON, Oct. 10 - As Hurricane Katrina put the issue of poverty onto the national agenda, many liberal advocates wondered whether the floods offered a glimmer of opportunity. The issues they most cared about - health care, housing, jobs, race - were suddenly staples of the news, with President Bush pledged to "bold action."

But what looked like a chance to talk up new programs is fast becoming a scramble to save the old ones.

Conservatives have already used the storm for causes of their own, like suspending requirements that federal contractors have affirmative action plans and pay locally prevailing wages. And with federal costs for rebuilding the Gulf Coast estimated at up to \$200 billion, Congressional Republican leaders are pushing for spending cuts, with programs like Medicaid and food stamps especially vulnerable.

"We've had a stunning reversal in just a few weeks," said Robert Greenstein, director of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, a liberal advocacy group in Washington. "We've gone from a situation in which we might have a long-overdue debate on deep poverty to the possibility, perhaps even the likelihood, that low-income people will be asked to bear the costs. I would find it unimaginable if it wasn't actually happening."

Mr. Greenstein's comments were echoed by Representative Rosa DeLauro, Democrat of Connecticut: "Poor people are going to get the short end of the stick, despite all the public sympathy. That's a great irony."

But many conservatives see logic, not irony, at work. If the storm exposed great poverty, they say, it also exposed the problems of the very policies that liberals have supported.

"This is not the time to expand the programs that were failing anyway," said Stuart M. Butler, a vice president of the Heritage Foundation, a conservative research and advocacy group influential on Capitol Hill.

While the right has proposed alternatives including tax-free zones for businesses and school vouchers for students, Mr. Butler said, "the left has just talked up the old paradigm: 'let's expand what's failed before.' "

Doubt about the effectiveness of some programs is only one factor shaping the current antipoverty debate. Another is political muscle: poor people do not make campaign contributions. Many do not even vote.

A third factor is the federal deficit, which leaves little money for new initiatives. And a fourth is the continuing support for tax cuts, including those aimed at the wealthiest Americans, which further limits spending on social programs.

Indeed, even as he was calling for deep spending cuts last week, Representative Mike Pence, Republican of Indiana, who leads the conservative caucus, called tax reductions for the prosperous a key to fighting poverty.

"Raising taxes in the wake of a national catastrophe would imperil the very economic growth we need to bring the Gulf Coast back," Mr. Pence said. "I'm mindful of what a pipe fitter once said to President Reagan: 'I've never been hired by a poor man.' A growing economy is in the interest of every working American, regardless of their income."

Economic growth is crucial to reducing poverty, but the effect of tax rates is less clear. In 1993, President Bill Clinton raised taxes on upper-income families, the economy boomed and poverty fell for the next seven years. In 2001, President Bush cut taxes deeply, but even with economic growth, the poverty rate has risen every year since.

In 2004, about 12.7 percent of the country, or 37 million people, lived below the poverty line, which was about \$19,200 for a family of four. The figure was 7.8 percent among whites, 24.7 percent among blacks and 21.9 percent among Hispanics.

Hurricane Katrina gave those figures a face as no statistic can.

"As all of us saw on television, there is also some deep, persistent poverty in this region," with "roots in a history of racial discrimination," President Bush said in a Sept. 15 speech from New Orleans. Using the language of the civil rights movement, Mr. Bush pledged "not just to cope, but to overcome."

But liberal critics say his policies will have the opposite effect.

The week before his speech, Mr. Bush suspended the Davis-Bacon Act, a 1931 law that prohibits federally financed construction jobs from paying wages less than a local average. The administration argued that the suspension, which applied only to storm areas, would benefit local residents by stretching financial resources.

Critics said the savings would come at the expense of needy workers.

Likewise, the president suspended rules requiring federal contractors to file affirmative action plans, which his allies called cumbersome.

"He talks about lending a helping hand to the poor and disadvantaged," Jared Bernstein, a researcher at the Economic Policy Institute, a liberal research and advocacy group in Washington, said of Mr. Bush. "But these policies push the other way, toward lower wages and less racial inclusion."

In another dispute, the president has taken on a senior member of his own party, Senator Charles E. Grassley of Iowa, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

Mr. Grassley wants to expand Medicaid to cover all the poor who survived Hurricane Katrina, including many adults who did not previously qualify. The expansion would last five months, though it could be extended, and the federal government would cover the costs.

While most Democrats support the measure, the Bush administration strongly opposes it, arguing that evacuees would be served faster through more modest changes in existing state programs. In part, the dispute has the feel of a proxy war about the larger fate of the program, which the administration has sharply criticized.

A similar proxy war has played out in housing policy after the Senate voted to house evacuees through the Section 8 program, which offers poor people subsidies for private housing. Critical of the program's cost, the administration instead created a parallel voucher program for hurricane evacuees.

In budget battles, the storm had one immediate effect: delaying the \$35 billion in spending cuts ordered in last spring's Congressional budget resolution. About \$10 billion over five years was expected to come from Medicaid and about \$600 million from food stamps.

The delay occurred after some lawmakers said it was wrong to cut safety net programs with so many storm survivors seeking aid.

But the pendulum is swinging the other way. Concerned about the storm's costs, a group of 100 House conservatives released a list of suggested spending cuts totaling \$370 billion over five years.

And President Bush weighed in last week, saying, "Congress needs to pay for as much of the hurricane relief as possible by cutting spending."

The chairman of the House Budget Committee, Representative Jim Nussle, Republican of Iowa, wants to increase the cuts in the budget bill to \$50 billion, from the \$35 billion agreed on last spring. Senate leaders are also talking of new cuts, though they have not announced a numerical goal.

As they search for spending cuts, neither chamber has turned away from the \$70 billion package of tax reductions authorized last spring. Mr. Greenstein, of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, says those tax cuts come on top of two others, passed in 2001, that are scheduled to take effect in January and that benefit the wealthiest Americans.

Mr. Greenstein argues that the logic of shared sacrifice requires the tax cuts to be reconsidered. But most Congressional Republicans disagree, including Mr. Pence, the conservative leader.

"To allow tax cuts to lapse is a tax increase," Mr. Pence said, "and the economy would suffer."

Some conservatives say the storm, in exposing the depth of poverty, gives them a chance to push their own solutions to the problem, like school vouchers or subsidies to help poor people accumulate assets.

"What we've done for the poor hasn't worked," said Robert L. Woodson, president of the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise, a conservative policy group. "People are going to say, 'How did these people get into this circumstance in the first place?' It gives us an opportunity to really turn over a new leaf."

I IN BRIEF

Krispy Kreme, cleaners aid mission coat drive

The City Rescue Mission of Lansing, with the help of Krispy Kreme and Carriage Cleaners, is collecting new and gently used coats for people of all ages.

The mission has set 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Nov. 5 as its coat giveaway day.

Coats may be dropped off at the mission, 607 E. Michigan Ave. Anyone who drops off coats at Krispy Kreme, 2129 Lake Lansing Road, in October will receive a dozen free doughnuts.

For information, call 485-0145.